

## Mrs Dowdell's Parenting Pointers

### Ignoring misbehaviour

We've probably all been told at some time or another by some well-meaning friend or relative "Just ignore them". To which we've probably thought, "Well, that's all very well but it's not your child throwing a massive tantrum in the middle of Sainsbury's." So, what behaviours can we ignore and how can we be most effective in using this technique? Here are some thoughts ...

The most important thing to note is that the ignore technique will only be effective if we are spending regular positive quality time (Special Time) with our children. If we are not creating an environment where our children are thriving on all the lovely positive attention we are giving them, they may not even notice if we remove that attention. Remember, all children crave our attention and they will display more of the behaviours that get noticed. This means we need to keep being really good at praising good behaviours when we see them and showing appreciation when they follow our instructions.



Obviously there are some behaviours that we cannot ignore. Hitting, refusing to follow instructions or breaking house rules need to have a consequence (more on this next week). But low level, annoying behaviours like whining, bickering, arguing with siblings, back chat, tantrums, etc., can be really effectively dealt with by choosing to ignore them. When a child learns that they won't get their own way by continuing to nag and whine at their parent, they will eventually stop. This takes perseverance on our part and we need to stay calm, showing no outward signs of anger or frustration. This can be really hard work to start with but will get easier with practice and as our children learn that they can't get our attention through inappropriate behaviour.

Perhaps most importantly, while we are giving the impression of ignoring our child, we need to be really aware of what they are doing. The second the whining stops, we need to be ready with a distraction or a redirection, taking their mind (and ours) off that thing that could have caused a big argument and back onto something more positive. For example, our child may try arguing with us because they want to go out and play with their friends just before tea time. After calmly explaining why that wouldn't be appropriate right now, we ignore further protests. As soon as the arguing subsides (and remember it takes 2 people to make an argument) we can distract our child by asking them if they would like to choose what's for pudding or help us to lay the table. There is no need to re-visit the problem, just move on, they will soon understand that arguing with you won't succeed.

Finally, a warning! If you haven't tried the ignore technique before, things may get worse before they get better. If our children are used to getting their own way through shouting and throwing a tantrum, they may try and escalate things even more when we try ignoring them. Remember to look for opportunities to distract and keep going! In time they will learn that you will stand firm and each time you will find that the process gets quicker and less painful for everyone. Good luck!

Got any questions? Need any help or advice? E-mail me at [parenting@foundrylanprimary.co.uk](mailto:parenting@foundrylanprimary.co.uk)